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SUBJECT: PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION: FIRST MEETING

REF: USUN 1229

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN R. BOLTON, REASONS: 1.5(b) (d)

11. (U) SUMMARY. UN officials, international financial representatives and 31 member states inaugurated the Peacebuilding Commission on June 23. The Angolan permrep took the chair, and announced the selection by consensus of Norway and El Salvador as vice chairs. Each will lead country-specific meetings that are initially expected (although still not confirmed) to focus on Sierra Leone and Burundi, which the Security Council requested. Speakers emphasized that the success of this innovative body would depend upon the cohesion and results orientation of the country groups, as well as implementation of their recommendations on the ground. Engagement of the country under consideration, including country ownership and a country's commitment to rebuilding its own institutions, were paramount. Speakers also underscored the central role of the Security Council, reflecting hard-fought principles that Ambassador Bolton had secured in lengthy negotiations. End Summary.

ANGOLA TAKES THE CHAIR

12. (C) Following introductory remarks by Secretary General Kofi Annan, Angolan Ambassador Ismael Gaspar Martins gaveled to order the first, ceremonial meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). There was a quiet relief that Egypt's attempt to wrest control of the PBC had just barely been foiled (reftel). Expectations, for the moment, ran high among UN officials, the 31 PBC member states, representatives of international financial institutions, the press and civil society (NGO) representatives. After months of bickering and negotiating over PBC reporting lines, equitable geographic representation, membership rotational plans and rules of procedure, among other issues, the first meeting had finally begun. The Angolan ambassador said, "As a representative of a country which is in the process of overcoming the negative consequences of many years of conflict, and from a continent with the largest number of countries in post-conflict situations, this choice is a symbolic recognition of the purposes for which our leaders decided to establish the Peacebuilding Commission."

13. (SBU) Angola then announced that PBC members had chosen by consensus Norway and El Salvador to serve as vice chairs. The chair and vice chairs will serve one-year terms, according to provisional rules of procedure. El Salvador's permrep Mrs. Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernandez immediately

announced her intention to infuse a gender perspective into the work of the PBC. Angola said that members had agreed to select Sierra Leone and Burundi as country focus groups at the first business meeting of the Organizational Committee. In an early indication of possible procedural difficulties, however, the chair unexpectedly declined to confirm their selection. USUN later learned that a Secretariat official had (inappropriately) advised the chair to delay this announcement until after the PBC held its first full business meeting, thus delaying a decision that PBC member states and the Security Council had agreed upon. Ambassador Gaspar Martins urged international donors to contribute to the voluntary Peacebuilding Fund. (Later that day, India announced a contribution of \$2 million.) Several speakers hailed the appointment of Carolyn McAskie, former SRSG to Burundi (Canadian), as the Assistant Secretary General of a small Peacebuilding Support Office.

14. (U) SYG Annan referred to the PBC as "a unique intergovernmental body" that "is the first specifically devoted to peacebuilding." He said the "core task" of the PBC is "to build effective public institutions within constitutional frameworks and the rule of law." He defined a limited and non-bureaucratic role for the Peacebuilding Support Office, specifically to provide information and analysis and to ensure that recommendations of the PBC are translated into concrete action at the country level. Annan added that however well-intentioned outsiders may be, they "cannot substitute for the knowledge and will of the people of the country concerned."

SUCCESS DEPENDS ON COUNTRY OWNERSHIP

15. (U) President of the General Assembly Jan Eliasson underscored this emphasis on country-level responsibility, which has reemerged gradually but consistently in the course of an arduous and elaborate negotiating process. In the complex interplay among 191 member states, there were no shortcuts to establish an innovative institution with multiple membership sources, a multifaceted coordination mandate, and crosscutting institutional reporting lines. Yet the PBC itself will need to be lean and efficient in order to make cogent, timely recommendations. "It is in the country-specific settings that the work of the Peacebuilding Commission ultimately will be judged," Eliasson said. SYG Annan expressed the hope that the PBC would focus its work on national situations and that national authorities would participate actively in country meetings.

16. (U) The World Bank was represented by Vice President James Adams. In Africa since the 1990's, he said some six million people have lost their lives and 15 million have been displaced. The destruction of physical infrastructure, loss of institutional capacity and social capital have amounted to an average loss 2.2% in annual growth per conflict. "Conflict brings appalling human suffering and loss," he said. "Conflict and state fragility produce a vicious cycle." From the World Bank's experience in working with countries emerging from conflict, Adams emphasized that progress needs to be driven from within. He pledged that the World Bank would be an active partner to the PBC. An IMF representative also emphasized the central need for country ownership. On behalf of the Security Council Presidency, Danish Foreign Minister Stig Moller stated, "The primary responsibility for building a nation lies with the national or transitional authorities of the individual country. Without the strong cooperation of the country on the agenda, the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission risk failure."

THE SECURITY COUNCIL IS PIVOTAL

17. (U) In an unusual nod to the central role of the Security Council, PGA Eliasson noted the importance of close coordination between peacekeeping and peacebuilding, which he said are both essential for reconstruction and rehabilitation. FM Moller reminded that the main purpose of

the PBC is to provide advice to the Security Council, "in particular when there is a UN mandated peacekeeping mission on the ground or underway, as stated in the resolution." Moller added that the SC would use PBC advice in its own deliberations and when reviewing the mandates of peacekeeping operations. A letter from the SC President requesting that Burundi and Sierra Leone be put on the first business agenda circulated as the second official document of the PBC. These country groups are expected to be formally adopted at the first meeting of the Organizational Committee, Angola said.

18. (C) COMMENT. The swift, pivotal request by the President of the Security Council to establish the first two PBC country groups was a deft jump-start, institutionalizing a core concept that the United States particularly sought. It is unfortunate that the PBC Chair did not follow through more decisively and that authorization of these two country groups has still not been confirmed in the absence of a follow-up OC meeting. Throughout negotiations to establish the PBC, Ambassador Bolton argued repeatedly, with strong interagency and legal support, for a core SC-PBC linkage. Effective peacebuilding will depend upon close coordination of peacekeeping operations and reconstruction programs on the ground. This formerly controversial assumption has gained increasing currency as the PBC has emerged.

19. (C) COMMENT CONTINUATION. While most PBC members say they are now committed to making the PBC work pragmatically and transparently, significant challenges lie ahead. For example, some countries and Secretariat staff continue to advocate for a heavier architecture for the Organizational Committee, including establishment of a traditional "bureau" reflecting geographic equities. As rules of procedure continue to evolve, we will advocate for a light OC structure that transfers action to the (hopefully) less formal country meetings. The role of NGOs has yet to be determined. Terms of reference for the administration of the voluntary Peacebuilding Fund, which the Secretariat drafted, are notably turgid and will require revision by member states. International financial institutions (IFIs) will participate in the PBC without compromising their own governing

arrangements. Nevertheless, questions have already arisen about whether the IFIs will need to join consensus in order for a country group to make a decision. Strong leadership of the country groups will be essential to avoid endless discourse and concur on recommendations from among the various participants. The U.S. will need to continue to play a proactive role in order to help shape procedures and discussions. We will seek the Department's guidance to identify a variety of stakeholders to participate in country-specific meetings, anticipating that USAID, among others, may bring particular expertise. End Comment.

19. (U) The current member state composition of the PBC follows:

Seven members from the Security Council including China, Denmark, France, the Russian Federation, U.K., Tanzania and the U.S.

Seven members elected by the Economic and Social Council, including Angola, Belgium, Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Poland and Sri Lanka.

Five top providers of assessed and voluntary contributions to UN budgets, funds and programs, including Germany, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, and Norway.

Five top providers of troops and civilian police to UN peacekeeping operations, including Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Nigeria and Pakistan.

Seven members elected by the General Assembly, including Burundi, Chile, Croatia, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji and Jamaica.

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